512 They turn in to sleep around 10:00 or 11:00 at night. Outside the season, the wake-up time is around 6:00 o'clock in the morning and bed-time is earlier: 7:00-8:00 P.M.

527 The holiday routine offers more relaxation and diversity. Some work around the house is done in the morning, after which the peasants don their best costumes and go to church. The divine services generally begin at 10:00 A.M. After church the men group on the streets and "talk politics" while the women rush home to prepare lunch. The afternoon begins with a siesta for a couple of hours, and then come some social activities: people visit each other, the men go to the tavern, and the women sit on their porches or in front of their houses. Girls walk along the streets in groups, often arm-in-arm, while young men stand around in groups and watch them. Later in the evening they may dance.

461 The attitude of the Magyar peasants toward work is in general a positive one. Their existence and activity are strictly regulated by the seasonal changes, which do not permit vacations or holidays except those set aside by tradition and religion. Their living standards, low as they are today, do not permit relaxation even in the winter months, for they have to create the commodities they use in their

In minstrelsy, when the descendants of the ancient Shamans come to the mysterious refrain of the magicians, they make a «frightening» noise with their instruments, and they top this with sounds imitating all kinds of animals. Their «musical» instruments are : a stick with a chain, a pipe and an extraordinary instrument — a potsherd covered with a pig's bladder. In the middle of this tight bladder is a tiny hole, with a reed stuck into it. If someone draws a wet finger along the reed, a queer, droning noise occurs. This instrument is a predecessor of the drum ; some versions of minstrels' songs say : «our drum is a fine iron pot», though the drum may not be of iron, but of earthenware. To these instruments occasionally bells are added and other noisy implements : lids made of tin and such like.

The «refrain», containing the magic words, is an important part of minstrelsy ; the «refrain» has many variations ; but according to learned reconstruction this is what the original words were :

My hiding place is an old law,
Holla ! I hide in songs !

meaning : «my magic has old laws, I conjure with songs !» The custom belongs to the feasts of the winter solstice (December the 25th) and therefore in most places about Christmas time the Hungarian minstrels go from house to house. They are fairly grown up boys or lads. Sometimes three or four go together, in other places some thirty or fourty. They usually pay their visit in the evening, at night or at dawn. They generally visit houses where there are marriageable girls, but the Szeklers go to the newly married couples. In a few districts their songs begin with references to an apparition of God :

10:Viski E-4,5 (no date)1932 ECI Hungary ECI

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Get up, farmer, get up,
God has descended on your house,
With His legions and His army,
With His winged angels,
His Table must be laid,
His glass filled.
My hiding place in an old law,
Holla! I hide in songs!

Then they wish, that is «tell» the farmer all kind of good things, in one place:

Six little oxen and three workers,
A golden whip-handle to one of the workers,
A golden plough-tail to the second,
A silver plough-tail to the third,
My hiding place is an old law,
Holla! I hide in songs!

According to one learned professor this introduction did not belong to the ancient words: perhaps it is an effect of Christian influence. In the Szekler version the song begins by describing how, when small winter snow flakes fall, the minstrels drove the hares and foxes into the village; and there into someone's courtyard, where they found a rich house:

We peeped through the window,
And saw a bed all made,
A pious farmer lay on its outer side,
His wife, a delicate lady,
Lay by the wall, on the inner side,
A curly haired babe lay between them:
He prompted his father and his mother:
Get up father, get up mother,
Because the minstrels have come.
My hiding place in an old law,
Holla! I hide in songs!

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

The refrain is sung after every line. — Then they chant «my magic has old laws, we conjured a magic ox; half of it belonged to the Regős». Then they go on «telling», that there is a great ox in the barn: there is roast on his back, cracknels on his horns, coins in his ears, a cobblers needle in his nose, a cube of hops in his navel, his tail is filled with walnuts, on the tuft of his tail hangs a glass of beer; finally they describe all the good things in the house and on the table. Half of the best things are to go to the minstrels, the bad things the farmer may keep for himself! The walnuts are for the curly haired babe. After each line they sing the refrain:

My hiding place is an old law,
Holla! I hide in songs!

But according to learned research this part of the song was preceded by the beautiful stag song of the Transdanubian version, in which some professors seek to discover the miraculous stag of Hungarian legends, or the magic stag which occurs in the legend of Saint Stephen, though it is well known that similar stag songs also occurred in the winter solstice performances of other peoples. This is how the Hungarian stag song has been reconstructed according to the ancient text:

A big, black cloud gets up over there,
A black raven cleans its feathers in it;
Where a fast river has its spring,
A round, small sward lies.
A stag with a miraculous head grazes on it,
A stag with a miraculous head
Has a thousand ends to his horns,
On these thousand ends burn a hundred thousand candles,
They burn without being lit,
They go out of themselves...

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533 After the song about the magic ox follows the minstrels' tale of the young people or the newly married couple, which is obviously the most ancient and most important part of minstrelsy. In its essence it is a thing which we have met in many other customs, most explicitly in the song which was to tie together by magic the young couples in the summer solstice. These were the spell-binding words of the minstrels according to the ancient text:

Here we see a pretty dame,
Her pretty name is (Judith),
There we see a fine lad,
His fine name is (Joseph);
My hiding place is an old law
Holla! I hide in songs!
God shall give a slow rain,
Wash both of them together,
Rolling them and twisting them
Like two golden apples,
Twirling them and whirling them
Like two golden twigs.
My hiding place is an old law
Holla! I hide in songs.

Once the magic had occurred, — let us hope with due effect, — then it was merely necessary to say good-bye and the minstrels' visit was over.

In a few versions, at the word «holla!» the couples were driven to each other, in the same way as in the spinnery customs the girls were driven to the lads, as a remnant of Midsummernight's traditions.

A buckled purse hangs on the peg,
It is filled with flat coins,
Half of them belong to our host,
The other half to us poor minstrels.
My hiding place is an old law
Holla! I hide in songs!

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

527 The minstrels usually represent animals: bulls, goats,
533 stags, pigs, cats, etc. The bull has often a chain round his neck; in Transdanubia the stag merely lives in the song. In some parts of Transylvania, in the districts of the Szamos and Maros rivers, the words have been forgotten, but the interesting mask of the stag has been preserved: it is a grotesque arrangement, its most prominent part being a carved jaw, which has to snap continually.

The part of the bull shows signs of the most ancient times. The performer has to bellow and behave riotously. In some places if the girl of the house brings him a present, he beats her without mercy. There are villages where the queer drum they use is called «bull». The ancient meaning of the bull is evident from all this: the great noise, the whipping of the girl, all remind one of the initiation ceremonies of primitive people, which also occur with great noise and which no woman must see. In a few places the visit of the minstrels is followed by the initiation of lads, after which the initiated have a right to visit girls and take part in dances.

In olden times minstrel «telling» was such a general custom that in the 17th century the second day of Christmas according to the Julian calendar was called «Minstrel Monday». And this is what a Transylvanian Hungarian wrote in the middle of the 16th century: — «Immediately after the celebrations on the birthday of Our Lord Jesus Christ, follows the great feast of the devil on Minstrel Monday, after that comes Carnival, . . . minstrelsy never seeming to come to an end . . .» The word «regős» (minstrel) appears already in a document of the 14th century, meaning a royal minstrel or bard.

Hungarian minstrelsy belongs to that group of customs, which celebrated the winter solstice; that is the memory of the Sun-god. For this reason the medieval Church

527 fathers and synods persecuted it with unceasing energy
533 through out the centuries. In a collection of speeches, which are attributed to Saint Augustine, but were written in the 6th or 7th century, we read: — «What intelligent person will believe that those sane men, who act as stags, want to be transformed into these senseless animals? Others clothe themselves in the hides of their oxen, or put on the heads of animals, and they rejoice and enjoy having thus transformed themselves into animals . . .»

These words of rebuke have not achieved complete success even to this day. These mimes appear every year to remined those who see into the depths of ancient customs, not to forget the pagan memory of the ancient solstice feast . . . Even to this day, when the Christian church has celebrated since the middle of the 4th century not the Sun-feast, but the birth of Jesus Christ, «who brought the sun itself» . . . the bull goes on bellowing and shaking his chain riotously, the stag snaps his hard, wooden jaw, the weird instrument drones, plenty of magic pervades the house, though no one understands the essence of the custom, nor its past meaning, not even the garbled, broken words of the refrain:

My hiding place is an old law,
Holla! I hide in songs!

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

Carnival customs — Lent games

461 Work as well as rest have their own regular time. If some one grumbles sleepily or groans miserably when the accumulation of summer work compels him to start at two or three o'clock in the morning, he is usually consoled by the remark : — «You'll have time to sleep it off between the two Christmasses !» (i. e. between Christmas and New Year.) — If his back aches, or pains shoot through his arms or legs, his consolation is : «You'll dance it off in Carnival !» — Winter is the resting time of the people who sow and reap. There is wheat in the barn, wine in the cellar, a fattened pig in the sty ! One can live somehow ! Towards the end of the winter, little is left of all these things, the barn gets emptier, the cellar less full, and merely a few
● 527 remnants of the poor man's pig hang in his larder. It is lucky that the days of fasting approach : on Ash-Wednesday begins Prince Cibere's rule, with its endless sour «cibere» soups . . . But before he arrives, let us anticipate him with all the joys of Carnival, food, drink, dancing and entertainment. Ash-Wednesday and its vow of fasting is still remote, we will have plenty of time to throw ashes on our heads. It will not be too late if we wail at dawn of Ash-Wednesday the words of this song :

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear,
To-morrow is Ash-Wednesday,
To-morrow it won't be as it is to-day !

To-day King Marrow-bone still rules, we may make free use of food and drink ! Love, like a hyacinth in a window, blooms most beautifully at the end of winter ; most of the weddings are celebrated during Carnival on

most of the weddings are celebrated during Carnival on
●527 new wine. Small wonder that a whole lot of customs and
[522] Carnival jokes multiplied, not so much at weddings as about weddings which were not held . . . Especially at the end of Carnival, at its «tail», round about Shrove Tuesday, when all disillusionment and lost hopes become evident. There are few such bitter sayings as this short and painful lament which contains a wealth of sarcasm :

Shrove Tuesday, all gone . . .
The day when girls are left at home !

The last day of Carnival is the most frolicsome, the noisiest and most ironical moment of the year ; it is the time of the freeest entertainments and most generous feasts. It is the poor man's «horn of plenty» ; «compared to it Christmas is nothing» — say the Paloc Hungarians — «it is the feast of the spendthrifts».

Of course amateur performers are not missing amidst the many Carnival jokes. In some places they «carry out jail birds» on Carnival's tail. Two lads are wound round from top to toe with straw ropes, on the head of one they put a plumed hat, on the head of the other they tie a scarf ; their faces are blackened with soot, they have to hold a hatchet or an axe, both are chained and thus they are paraded from house to house. In their wake follow boys and girls with the accompaniment of music and song. At each house they are given something, and from the things thus collected they arrange a grand dinner. In other places King Marrow-bone is buried or they «carry out winter», as Prince Cibere is carried out at the end of Lent, in the person of some willing performer. The custom of dragging a tree-trunk through the village is also still alive. A big stem is pulled along with ropes and in front of the houses of marriageable girls the procession stops, shouting :

• 527

Wail, wail, wail, wail,
I was left out of Carnival!

With this they tease especially the proud and stuck-up girls, who have refused some lad. In the North-eastern part of Hungary another custom, very like the dragging of a trunk, was fashionable. There they fixed two dolls — representing a man and a girl — to a cart-wheel and trundled it through the village before the Shrove-Tuesday entertainment. A horse drew the wheel, being harnessed to it by a long rope. Behind it followed a merry crowd, with song and music and dancing. This is illustrated — but already as a spring custom — by our picture of the County of Sopron.[1] Here children draw the wheel, — since every ancient custom ends in children's hands. Children's games are the last stage but one of ancient customs. After that come decay and oblivion.

Driving out the «virgin herd» is a costum practiced in the district beyond the Tisza. The «virgin herd» is a whole crowd of children equipped with all kinds of noisy instruments. The «virgin herd» is driven with cracking whips into the yard of every house in which a marriageable girl has not got engaged, and the farmer is asked to send the girl into the «herd».

The riotous entertainments at the end of Carnival last from its last Sunday to Ash-Wednesday, on which day one can still practise «dawn jokes», that is make some din at dawn, which is certain to disturb sleep and rest. After that we can throw ashes on our heads, repent us of our sins, lose what-ever weight we put on during the plenty of Carnival, and at the weddings celebrated «in the hills and the valleys». Then we must make our fasting vow . . .

ooo During Lent godly, good Catholics know no dance, music or entertainment. But the young people must find

[1] [See category 116, p. 33 — Analyst]

443 583 Krasznibrod has already been prohibited in the 18th century. The name is practically all that has survived of the Hungarian girl markets, which to-day are, in reality, simple markets or fairs.

The memory of a Szekler girl market, which used to be accompanied by the ringing of angel bells, is still alive. The sound of the bells alone was angelic, the people who rang them were far from being snow white angels: they were black faced gipsies, who held a bell and cattle-bell market in the same place on the same day. Of course with the bells the gipsies also brought their violins and their pipes, so there was music and naturally fights as well, since no market or fair could be imagined without them. The authorities stopped this market too.

In olden times a Hungarian market lasted several days, sometimes quite two weeks, and the Sundays were called the «girl market days», as on those days everyone had time to go to the market; and go they did, especially the young people: the day never passed without dancing and amusements. There are certain Hungarian markets which in memory of old customs are called girl markets to this day.

443 527 Hungarian markets are generally counted as holidays. Those who go to the market, dress in their most beautiful clothes, and in some places the mothers carry a whole wardrobe for their marrigeable daughters. The girls change several times a day, as a Matyó bride does at every new tune. At almost every Hungarian market there is a chop-house and an arbour, there is feasting, music, dancing and naturally acquaintances are made. Thus more or less every market, even every fair is at the same time a girl market.

443 In summer time the great cart camp of a market or a fair is a very interesting sight. The multitude of buyers and sellers or fair visitors spend their nights there, as the markets or the fairs last several days. Varied national costumes

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

The May-tree

527 773 The origin of the May-tree is explained by a charming legend . . . When the apostles Philip and James were converting the Scythians and other pagan tribes, a devout virgin joined them and helped them to win over heathens to the true faith. Therefore the pagans slandered her badly and accused her of impurity. Hearing these accusations, the poor innocent virgin stuck her staff into the ground and, turning her face towards heaven, implored God to look upon her and give some sign proving her innocence. God heard her prayer, and lo ! green leaves and twigs shot out from the stick ! It is for this reason that at dawn on the two apostles day : on the first of May, the May-tree is set up. But Hungarian lads are not very likely to remember this. All they know about the May-tree is what their song says about it :

In front of my sweetheart's house
A tall tree has grown over night,
The wings of a soft wind
Wave a red kerchief in its branches . . .

527 883 The May-tree is a tall young tree ; its branches are lopped off and only its crown is left, forming a green top. This leaf bouquet is decorated with ribbons and bright scarves. The tree does not grow by itself, as one is supposed to think according to the songs, but the lads set it up infront of the girls' houses. In some places, if the tree happens to be very small, it is stuck either onto the gate or onto the roof of the house. The Matyó lads have the custom to carry the tree as far as the gate ; but the girls set it up and decorate it. Here usually one or two bottles of wine find their way onto the tree ; in other places painted eggs are also hung upon it. As is the case with other customs, the date of setting up the May-tree has often been mixed

527 883 up with the habits of other important days. In some districts it is set up at Easter.

May-trees are not distributed freely in every village. There are places in which only one common tree is set up in front of the church. In one village Whitsun habits have been mingled with the May-tree custom. On Whit-Monday the lads who set up the common May-tree accompany one of their number on horseback, who is covered with green leaves as is also his horse, to every house where there is a marriageable girl. Surrounding their leaf-covered companion in the middle of the courtyard, they ask for May-tree money, threatening that unless they get it, the horseman will gallop round the whole yard. This lad, clothed in green, reminds one of certain rain conjuring customs.

There exists that other custom as well, whereby the lads elect from amongst themselves a «sad king», who — like the Witsun queen — is not allowed to laugh while they make the round of the girls' houses. Just as at Easter, so now too they get presents. This «sad king» reminds one of the initiation ceremony of some primitive peoples... In a serious initiation the candidate must not show fright nor laugh at any joke.

527 [751] As in customs connected with budding twigs in general, the May-tree may have had power to prevent illness and ward off evils, or it may have had a purifying effect in general. At least according to popular belief!

[713] The May-tree set up in front of the church is a symbol of the restraining and ennobling tendency of the Christian religion. The first of May is the day of the apostles Philip and James. The tree set up in front of the church recalls the miracle of the stick of the virgin, who went with them. As for getting rid of evils, it is well known that Saint Philip freed the town of Phrygia from a terrible man-eating serpent: — «... While he prayed the terrible snake died and the town was released...»

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

Whitsuntide customs

527 177 The Hungarians came into their present lands more than a thousand years ago, and it was naturally here that they adopted Christianity and learnt all the terms of the Christian faith; often indeed they merely clothed with a new meaning the old expressions of their former pagan creed. The Hungarian name of Whitsun: «pünkösd», like its German synonym «Pfingsten», is derived either from the Latin «Dies Pentacostis», or the original Greek «Pentakosté» of the New Testament. The Hungarians did not call this feast after the rose as did their Slav neighbours, but its popular name is «Red Whitsun», and one of the favourite flowers in Hungarian gardens is the «Whitsun rose», that is the peony. As early as the 18th century a charming Hungarian folk song mentions Whitsun in connection with the rose:

> You wern't born from a mother,
> You have grown on a rosebush;
> On Red Whitsun's day
> You were born from a rose!

This fragment of a popular song undoubtedly formed part of the habitual Whitsun songs or the game known as «Whitsun's queen».

527 789 883 857 The fact that the Hungarian name of Whitsun is merely a thousand years old does not imply that the Hungarian game of having a Whitsun queen originates from a similar date. It is much older than human memory and is merely an adaptation of the feast of fertility and fertilization, celebrated at the time of nature's blossoming. It is a pagan tradition, which lives all over Europe in the Christian world, surreptitiously and almost entirely devoid

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

527 789 883 857 of its real meaning. But everywhere it has its local colour, its local bearing or its local peculiarities. According to the simplest form of this custom, the older girls rig out a little one in a white dress and carry her all over the village. The child has a wreath on her head and her face is covered by a veil. Thus they carry the mysterious little queen from house to house, from yard to yard and, dancing around her, they sing their charming song:

God has brought us
Red Whitsun's day,
We will carry around
Our little queen,
And the rose wreath of
Our little queen.
To young men we give
A bunch of sweet carnations,
To old men we give
A bottle of sweet wine,
To old women we give
A delicious dove pie.
I wasn't born from a mother
I have grown on a rosebush,
On Red Whitsun's day
I was born in the dawn, etc.

At the end of the song they lift the little queen by her arms with the cry: «let's lift the queen!» — She is usually a small girl of five or six and lifting her veil they say to the lady of the house: «May your hemp grow as high as this!» It is well known that amongst other things hemp is also the symbol of fertility. As the lifting of the Whitsun queen symbolizes a magic charm to ensure a good hemp harvest, so sitting her on the ground is supposed to prevent the hemp from growing. This is what the procession does if the hostess will not give the queen a warm reception, or will not allow her to enter the court-yard, or if having let her enter it, she puts nothing into the basket of the ladies-

189 in-waiting. The magic extends in some places to other
527 plants as well, in the following order:

883 The queen's wand
Shall bring to this house
857 Wine, wheat and fruit.

Hemp is the symbol of fertility, and now-a-days the Whitsun feasters apply their magic primarily to an ample hemp harvest; but they also wish for abundant «wine, wheat and fruit», the main products of this little agricultural country. There is a close connection between the admittance of young men to manhood and this fertilizing magic; and we do find in the latter faint traces of an ancient initiation ceremony. Thus it is a rule that the queen's face must remain composed even if people lift her veil, laugh at her or tickle her. Very similar is the duty imposed on the «sad king», who has a part in the custom of setting up a May-tree: he is not allowed to laugh either. This same custom is prevalent in the initiation ceremonies of primitive people: the person who is being initiated is not allowed to show fright, nor must he laugh whatever the joke may be.

527 Very long ago the King of Whitsun probably appeared
883 with the little queen. Traces of this are found in one of
857 the Whitsun games on the Great Plain, where one of the bridesmaids has a kerchief around her head, as though she were a married woman, and another girl acts the part of the bridegroom. The song of these Whitsun celebrators refers also to a Hungarian royal wedding of the Árpád family, which occurred in 1211, the bride being no less a person than Saint Elisabeth of Hungary, who married a prince of Thuringia. She was the daughter of King Andrew II. of Hungary. We may well wonder why the children's custom preserved the memory of this great event. This is the song:

[See cat 116, p. 62 -- Analyst]

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

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What is to-day? What is to-day?
It is Red Whitsuns day;
To-morrow will be, to-morrow will be
Its second day, its second day.
Andrew is gallant and grand,
He is married and a good dancer;
Her husband is a rare lad,
While she is as good as gold.
Hold well, pull well
The bit of your horse,
It shan't trample, it shan't crush
Whitsun flowers, red peonies.
Whitsun's flower, the red peony
Leant over the main road,
The bride shall pick her up
And tie her into a wreath.

In this variation sung on the Great Plain Andrew alone is mentioned, but in another known in Transdanubia the queer, tottering lines of the ancient text speak of the princess as well.

My sister, my sister, my sister,
My Lady Saint Elisabeth,
I would willingly ransom you
If only I had a ransom.
Why did you give yourself
To someone else, to someone else?
I gave myself
To some one else,
God shall be kind to me,
Take care of me.

How did the Hungarian princess, sent as a bride to Thuringia at the age of four, find her way into the playful remnants of this ancient pagan custom? Perhaps through the legends woven about Elisabeth? The beautiful figure of Saint Elisabeth fitted perfectly into the Whitsun games, all mixed up with «Whitsun roses», since the alms meant for her poor had turned into roses in her lap. In other

games played by the children at Whitsun, Saint Elisabeth stands on the drawbridge, facing the people who want to enter the castle; in the next stage they spy around the castle in order to find out whether there is a marriageable girl in it; they then sing about Elisabeth's «queenly qualities»; finally they kidnap her after the ancient manner of acquiring brides, and carry her off into a royal tent, made of silk.

Though learned research is not quite certain about the connection, it is undeniable that the ancient pagan «king of the spring» feasts have had their separate Hungarian development. We mention this merely as a proof of the existence of such local, in this case Hungarian, modifications.

While the rosy cheeks of the little Whitsun queen fit so beautifully the rosy mood of Red Whitsun's day, in a few places there are also Whitsun kings and Whitsun royal elections. The Hungarian proverb: «It lasts as long as a Whitsun kingdom» (meaning quickly passing glory) is derived from this custom. In many places Whitsun's kingdom resolves itself into the election of an arbiter of young men. Small wonder, considering that once the two meant the same thing. The Whitsun king is elected nowa-days, but at one time he had to win a competition to acquire such exalted rank; he had not merely a high position, but owned a royal throne! There was no literal throne, but he had the title of king, and Whitsun's king had power, exceptional rights and regalia. In Transdanubia the competition was often a race run on horseback. Usually the cleverest lad acquires his distinction by strength and shrewdness. Whitsun's Kingdom lasts for a year. It can only continue if in the next year's race Whitsun's King wins again. Otherwise the privileged position is gone, and so is power and the right to eat and drink at the expense of other lads! In one word the lovely dream — Whitsun's Kingdom — is over!

527 883 As it is now in this game, so is it with real kings in the case of primitive people, and so was it probably with the ancient Hungarian leaders. The king was sent asleep, but into eternal sleep, as perhaps the Hungarians did with their leader Álmos, who led them as far as this country. Álmos in Hungarian means «sleepy». According to simple people death is only a kind of sleep; children have the same notion.

[773] The Hungarian peasant explains the election of the Whitsun king as «. . . the imitation of an old custom. Once upon a time the councillors of the country elected every year a new king on Whitsun's day; he was usually a shepherd boy. They gave him a sleeping draught, and they were wont to seat him on the throne in an unconscious state. But his power only lasted until the following Whitsun. Then he was put asleep in the same way and was sent back to his old place.»

In the case of many of the more primitive peoples real kingship is more or less a Whitsun kingdom — passing glory. It does not last until the king's life is over, in fact it ends when the people so decide, or when the king is conquered. Then he is set aside and a stronger man takes his place.

[881] A few of the old customs in use for the initiation of adolescents have found their way into the custom of Whitsun's kingdom. We have already referred to the fact that in one variation of the game a bridgeroom appears beside the queen, and that one ancient Hungarian royal marriage has also been mixed up in it.

883 651 527 Serious ancient customs or habits are thus turned in the course of time into childish games, bearing faint marks of old memories. A thousand years ago the Hungarians brought terrifying new war tactics into Europe, and pious Western friars added to their prayers: «From the arrows

of the Hungarians Good Lord deliver us !» These terrifying arrows have also become children's toys in our days... Two worlds preserved the things men used in ancient time: the world of primitive people and the world of children. In these two worlds the King of Whitsun lives. In one quite seriously, in the other only as a game.

In some parts of the country merely the name «little queen of Whitsun» is still alive, but her four companions, who represent the four evangelists, bear no trace of pagan influence. The first mentions a lion, the second an angel, the third a lamb: the symbols of the evangelists. The fourth ought to mention the eagle, but he only refers to the regal bird's empire of the clouds in the air, and in a way which almost suggests rain conjuring:

Oh wine, dear wine,
Has no cloud been this way?
A cloud shall come this way
From the lofty sky!

A veil however covers the face of the little queen according to ancient custom...

The feast of wheat

«Wheat, wine, peace and a good looking wife !» — Thus does the Hungarian man summarize the collection of wishes he expects life to fulfil for him, — or which he wants to gain in his fight with Fate. The wine of Tokaj, Eger, Badacsony, Somlyó, the bread and festive cakes of the Tisza district, stay in the memory of the person who has once tasted them. Did we wish to express the longing for these things in a popular form, we would say:

Whoever has drunk the water of the Tisza,
Always longs to come back to it!

252 required, and each person brings his or her own implement. They cannot turn up with any odd one in such a gathering, so each person brings proudly a decorated one, just as girls only take to the spinnery the distaffs which their lovers have so beautifully carved.

773 The great importance and distinction of bread makes it necessary that it shall be duly honoured when still in the form of wheat, all the more so as the Creator himself carved man's face on every ripe grain. According to a Legend, when God had turned man out of the Garden of Eden, he ordered him to search for the grain bearing his image, to grow it and work for it with the sweat of his brow, «because, although he had heard that it would mean death, he forgot and ate of the forbidden fruit».

788 The blessing of the wheat crop by the Church, which takes place on the day of Saint Mark, has therefore a great importance and meaning in Hungarian life. It is at the end of April, there is hope of life and the young crops are green like untouched promises. The people go in procession to the chosen wheat field where, under God's free sky, the future bread is blessed. Each person returns to his home with one ear from the field which has been blessed, — with a promise of new hope. It is blessed, so that «fog shall not strangle, hail shall not destroy, storm shall not trample, fire shall not consume the only hope of the poor». Later on the Calvinists at their communion thank God with fresh bread for having watched the growth of the crops. In some districts ears picked from the blessed field are supposed to have a healing, increasing or magic effect, and therefore they are greatly esteemed.

241 But let us get down to work! It is Peter and Paul's
527 day, the stalk of the wheat is torn, and when the wind touches it, it undulates in golden waves. Poor people do the reaping themselves, helped by their family. Those

11: Karolyi E-4, 5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

527 what faded, but it can still be clearly traced. In some
524 regions the lads organize driving or horse-riding races, in others the roping of the bull is the attraction of the day, which is followed by the election of the Whitsun King, recalling the tournaments of old which gave the setting for the election of tribal leaders. The Whitsun King's symbolic reign lasts only from Sunday noon to Monday evening, hence the much-quoted proverb recalling the brevity and futility of earthly things: "short as the Kingdom of Whitsun".

The election of a Whitsun Queen is another relic of ancient rites, surviving in the form of children's games. In some villages the girls choose one of their own, whom they parade round the village as their deeply veiled Whitsun Queen. They sing merrily the words of the age-old Whitsun song:

> In a rose-tree have I grown
> On Red Whitsun's Day...

and perform little games which recall the invocation of fertility practised in a forgotten past.

796 Corpus Christi is the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday, and is known as the Day of the Lord. It is Hungary's great festival in honour of the Holy Eucharist. Open-air altars are erected on this day in various parts of the villages, and a procession, of which perhaps only the picturesqueness is greater than the solemnity, visits these decorated altars in ritual succession.

One of the most popular and most interesting of the festivals of the summer is celebrated on the Day of St John the Baptist, the twenty-fourth of June, popularly known as St Ivan's Day. Originally the great festival of the summer solstice, today it has descended to us as a midsummer night's dream which reaches

241 who cannot manage all the work themselves engage reapers
527 and in some places make agreements with their workers as early as the New Year. Or in ancient fashion the owner counts on the help of his friends and the assistance of kind people who help all those in trouble. Of course one kindness deserves another: while working the reapers often rest; though their's is no real rest, because during that time they dance a few turns, and not only for the dance, but even for the work, the gipsy band plays gaily! Now-a-days this only happens in Transylvania, as the advance of time has modernized this work too: it has become quick, hurried, businesslike, mechanized. The poor people, who have very little land or grow very little wheat, organize themselves into reaping bands, who look for work and go
527 to the bigger estates to do the reaping. In the parts of the country where the love of tradition has not completely died out we can still see very old, amusing and gay reaping customs. — When the landowner appears for the first time near the reaping ground the reaping girls and women meet him and tie him up with a straw rope. He is only released for a ransom! All over the country the feast which celebrates the end of the reaping has given rise to many customs. At the reaping we meet straw wreaths and peculiarly shaped, beautifully arranged wheat bouquets. In most places only the sons and daughters of the farmer, or his servants, bind the wreath according to ancient custom and attach it to the frame of a mirror or a picture if it is square, or hang it on a cross-beam if it is round.

In Transylvanian Calvinist churches it is the custom to make a biggish wheat wreath on the occasion of taking new bread. It hangs from the ceiling just over the Lord's table until next year's new bread.

In certain places it is still the custom to carry the reaping wreath ceremoniously home to the farmer. The

●527 reapers go through the village to the farmer's house singing, dancing and accompanied by music. Girls dressed in white, or into their best clothes, carry the wreath. In olden times bigger wreaths were fashionable than those of to-day, and they were carried on a pole from the fields to the farmer's house. In some districts the most beautiful girl of the village is crowned with wheat ears, or the wreath is stuck on the end of a long pole. In many places, especially in Transylvania, it is still customary to wait in every gate for the crowned lad or girl with a pail of water, and to throw it at them — possibly into their face — to ensure a rich harvest for the next year. When they reach home, the same shower greets them from the farmer and each member of his household. Preparations for this are all the simpler, as the reapers approach noisily, singing and sometimes even accompanied by music. At the farmer's house there is then a big meal, perhaps dancing as well, as a due end to the great, important work. There are places where on their arrival they greet the farmer with a poem, and then hang the wreath in its accustomed place. There it hangs, revered by all, until the next harvest. This is a poem invented for such an occasion in the Palóc country :

Harvest time is over,
And our gracious lord has now turned to us.
We come to meet him in great haste,
We have bound a fragrant wreath to please him.
We have tied the wreath of lovely wheat ears
And beautiful garden and field flowers.
We brought this to our lord,
To join with his thanksgiving for the harvest.
May God keep him in good health and strength,
For many, many long years.
May God allow our master to live long,
May he and his lady live like a pair of doves.
The name of Jesus Christ shall be praised.

527
262 We must not forget the custom of presenting the reapers with cakes; the extraordinary cakes made for the occasion and the particular and renowned cakes of certain towns. The most beautiful festive presents, exchanged at fairs and fashionable in towns, are the ginger breads, which are ornamented, beautifully shaped, coloured and sometimes are not merely the symbols of love, but also express it by means of the eloquent verses stuck on them. This is a very interesting section of Hungarian popular art, well worthy of study. They are shaped by means of a wooden mould. Thus are moulded charming babes, beautifully harnessed horses, grand carriages, swords, pistols, fine ladies, slim girls, terrifying bandits, elegant hussars, Turkish pashas, hearts, bouquets of flowers, so that each person may get what his heart most desires. The boy receives the sword, the young minx the young man in a top hat, the longing heart another heart made of ginger bread or a bouquet of flowers.

Amongst the cakes we should mention the multitude of wedding cakes and biscuits, the most interesting of all being the cock and hen of sugar cake made in Boldog which is placed in front of the bridegroom and the bride. This is a more refined form of the custom, prevalent in other districts, whereby a live cock and hen is the due of the young couple.

As befits one of the first corn growing countries of Europe, other specialities are: the rolls of Pozsony, the flead cakes of Torda and the Szekler country, the cracknels of Debrecen, and on top of a long list of similar things figure the pastries of Budapest, the various puddings and turnover pies; sweet cakes, doughnuts and fritters.

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

Saint Ivan's fire

527 It is very strange that the Hungarian people refer to one of Saint John's days as «Saint Ivan's day». Saint Ivan's day is on the 24th of June, that is on the day of the summer solstice; at the time when Hungarian wheat, Saint Ivan's apples and cherries ripen; in midst of the season of white bread, green apples and red cherries. It is, as it were the symbol of ripening in the sun's rays, of the quick increase of celestial warmth and human passion. Perhaps once upon a time it was the natural summer feast of love, which is fated to recur only periodically. The sun's fire flamed, and from its flames fires were lit in human hearts. It was the great human feast of the heavenly fire which had struck the earth: no, not Saint Ivan's day... but the summer solstice. For innumerable thousands of years men celebrated this feast, first perhaps merely instinctively, later on as the feast of a wonderful phenomenon of the heavens... Many, many thousands of years later there appeared on the earth a previously unknown power: — the Church, and with admirable adaptation it transmuted the feast of the heavenly and earthly fire into the feast of the Burning Tongues (Whitsun). It surrounded the ancient fire with the thorny hedge of its laws, just as it tried to eliminate from practice and memory the winter solstice feast of pagan sun-worship by fixing the birthday of the Founder of the Church instead of that of the sun god on the 25th of December.

But a couple of thousand years are not sufficient to extinguish feasts dictated by nature. Though the original meaning of ancient pagan feasts gradually became obliterated, and their ceremonies circumscribed, they did not altogether fade from human tradition. Human memory is,

in a sense, like the geological layers of the earth. In both 527
the remnants and memories of a more ancient life are preserved. Still . . . there is one difference between them. The remnants of life buried in the earth are immobile, dead and petrified, whilst the ancient layers of human culture stir during the hours dedicated to their memory . . . In words, poems, music and mimicry they come to life and bear testimony to human life as it existed thousands of years ago.

The day on which the calendar of the Church fixed Saint Ivan's day used to be the feast of love in the calendar of ancient man. The ancient pagan feast, which co-incides with the Christian feast of Pentecost, is the feast of the internal fire which burns for ever in man. The symbolic feast of this internal fire is preserved by many traditions and superstitions. This is one of the simplest: a tall tree trunk is set up on top of the nearest hill, or a suitable tree is chosen for the occasion; a number of old baskets are placed on it, and a girl's wreath is laid on top of them. When this is done, the tree is set on fire at sunset. Sometimes a number of Saint Ivan's fires flame up at a smaller or greater distance from each other. If the wreath also catches fire, it is a good sign: its owner will soon get married . . . This form of the custom is merely a small fragment of the ancient fire feast. We can find this feast nowhere in its complete form, as the teachings and practice of a new moral conception naturally strove with all their vigour to eradicate this most pagan memory of paganism, and they have been really successful in doing so. This ancient solstice feast has been erased to such an extent that it can only be redrawn with very pale lines, its contours alone can be indicated.

The other Hungarian name of Saint Ivan — Flowery Saint John — also suggests something. — Why flowery?

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

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782 Where the custom of making a fire on Saint Ivan's day is still prevalent in a more complete form, the lads and the girls set on fire at sunset straw pyres mixed with fragrant herbs. The fire is laid on a square place. The ceremony is long, and some people — perhaps the old, perhaps those whose turn comes late — will find it boring . . . It is as long as the song of Saint Ivan's night . . .

But let us go nearer to the game. It is just beginning, as the song — the song of Saint Ivan — says :

We lay his fire,
We lay it on a square ;
In one of its corners
Sit good looking old men,
In its second corner
Sit good looking old women,
In its third corner
Sit good looking young lads,
In its fourth corner
Sit beautiful young girls.

Everyone is placed in his or her traditional place, in the four corners of the world sit the four groups of people ; each bunch gathered according to age and sex. Saint Ivan's fire is not burning yet . . . It is just being laid . . . Then the charming of the young couples begins, they are «sung together», so that in the words of the minstrels, they shall be «spun and woven» together with the blessing of the common song, that is public opinion . . . The song links each boy with a girl, calling them out in couples in due order and with full names :

Whose horses are over there
Under the great mountains?
There indeed I can see
The horses of (Stephen Nagy).
(Anne Kiss) return me my horses
I will also return you
Your geese.

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

When every couple has been charmed and «sung together» with the magic song, then Saint Ivan's square fire is also lit beside the flaming fire of love! The fragrant fire of the flowery saint is lit amidst this song: 527 782

Flowery Saint John,
Your night is light;
While I am before you
I'll honour you;
Keep light so long
And be dark after that.

It is possible that the memory of the cult of the two fires, the heavenly and the human fire, is lurking in this verse. Now comes a ceremony of a strange purifying nature, which once upon a time may have even implied human sacrifice to the sun or to the fire. This can be guessed from the following verse of the song, though of course these hypotheses have to be handled with great caution:

(Stephen Nagy's) stone house should be set on fire.
Let us put it out! Let us put it out!
We must not desert the poor wretches!
(Anne Kiss') stone house should be set on fire.
Let us put it out! Let us put it out!
We must not desert the poor wretches!

That the festive fire was a sacrifice as well as a ceremony we infer not only from the fragrant herbs which are mixed with the straw, but from the fact that in certain places the girls go to the fire in a procession with flower wreathes, and that they throw the first-fruits of spring, — apples and cherries, — into the fire. In a subsequent part of the song one can infer from the word *Rutafa* that this plant also played an important part in the ceremony. This plant is the Artemisia Abrotanum L., and Hungarians call one of its varieties Saint John's herb, Artemisia vulgaris. The former is the symbol of virginal purity. Anyhow

527 the «ruta» is a famous herb, one ancient record refers to
782 it in connection with frankincense; according to another
[824] it sharpens the eye-sight, according to a third snakes hate its smell, — just as the devils hate that of frankincense. Once upon a time human beings were sacrificed, but later on only the symbol of virginal purity was offered up to the summer sun, just as on the Hungarian Ducking Monday girls were once really thrown into the water, whereas later on they were merely made soaking wet at the well. Later still, one bucket of water was enough, while to-day merely a few drops of scent represent the once drastic custom of Ducking Monday... Thus both a custom and a ceremony, which in olden times were serious and solemn, have become senseless games.

527 But let us continue with the thread of the song. Now comes the catharsis, the purifying part of the ceremony, when the young couples jump over the square fire, which flames to the four points of the compass. According to the test imposed by the song, they jump in couples and the magic song continues:

The «ruta» tree is tall
And it has many branches,
It has even leant over
The great sea.

One of its branches
Leant over the yard of (Paul Nagy)
Onto (Stephen Nagy)
Whose hair is silky but mouse coloured.

Its other branch leant
Over the yard of (Paul Kiss)
Onto (Anne Kiss)
Whose hair is silky but mouse coloured.
(Anne Kiss, Anne Kiss)
With the mouse coloured silken hair
Wears a crown of pearls on her hair.

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

Thus the symbolic plant of purity, the «ruta», leans towards two love stricken hearts. The next part of the song praises the virgins, it is a «flower song» in the original sense of the word. Those who believe in the tenacity or the stubbornness of popular customs, may regard the end of this verse as a confession of pagan faith, when the pansy, the flower of love, is victorious over the flower which gives the bread and wine of the Gospel : 527

Three flowers were competing with each other,
My flower, I'll go with you,
My flower, I shall not leave you.

The beautiful Wheat flower speaks proud words :
«Do not compete with me, you lovely Wine flower,
The whole world lives on me, indeed on me».
My flower, I'll go with you,
My flower, I shall not leave you.

The beautiful Wine flower speaks proud words :
«Do not compete with me you lovely Wheat flower,
Because holy mass is served with me, indeed with me».
My flower I'll go with you,
My flower I shall not leave you.

The beautiful Pansy, loveliest of flowers, speaks proud words,
«Do not compete with me lovely Wine and Wheat flowers,
Because with me all the fine girls parade !»
My flower, I'll go with you,
My flower, I shall not leave you.

It is perhaps at this point that we see the last flash of this ancient ceremony. The chorus, maybe only that of the good looking old men and good looking old women, call for greater reticence :

Rejoice, but more slowly, my dear young ones,
That Mary may sleep until dawn,
Golden haired Mary, move the sun lower,
Bring down the moon to where the sun goes down,
The sun goes down in Mary.

[527] It is obvious that certain teachings of the new church were mingled with this part, and that is the reason why it is so unintelligible. Only one thing is certain: the whole atmosphere calms down. The rest is sung only by the choir of the lovers:

Bend, my love, bend
The twigs of the cherry tree,
That I may pluck the best,
The sweetest for my lover,
The roundest for myself.
When the nut gets ripe,
Its leaves fall off,
Nuts, walnuts crack
Under the dry leaves!

[824] These lines symbolise the last event of the feast of mating. The cherry is the symbol of the ripeness of love, and the nut is the symbol of mating not only here but in Hungarian folk-lore in general. The plum has a similar meaning. Instead of going into a full explanation of this verse, it is quite sufficient to quote a few popular songs:

The cracking cherries are ripening,
Luck is turning to the girls,
The cherry is ripening, its leaves are turning yellow,
One little girl is heartbroken because she has no lover!

Spurs are clinking and clanking,
Nuts are asked from the bride,
The bride shall give them to him:
They shall not clink, they shall not clank so much.

By every single window
A couple of nut trees are standing,
Only before my window
There stands a solitary tree.

The day of Saint Ivan is a mating feast, its ritual and aim are fully explained by the symbolic verses of the above songs. But many other customs are also connected with this day and the more famous were thus summed up by a learned Transylvanian Calvinist priest, Peter Bod (1712—1767): — «These were the things they used to do on that day: 1. The children collected all kinds of rubbish and bones in order to burn them and make a great smoke, the reason being that the pagans used to make fires about that time around the wells, so that snakes should not multiply in their neighbourhood, as usually happens about the day of Saint John. The Christians, in their ignorance, made fires about that same time and leapt over them, wishing that all their sadness might get burnt. — 2. They carried hot embers along the boundaries of their land, hoping that the harvest of the fields would thus be blessed. — 3. In some places they rolled wheels on that day, meaning that the sun had already reached the top of the horizon, and that everything was on the eve of change.»

We have already said what an effective drug the «ruta», mentioned in the song, proved against snakes, and we added that in an old Hungarian chronicle it was classed with frankincense. All the customs grouped on this day have also a purifying tendency.

According to a record of the second half of the last century, «they seek to drive away dragons and devils with the fragrant herbs thrown into the fire, so that harmful tempests shall not destroy the young crops, and the wells and springs shall not get poisoned. In some places, to this end they make evil smelling smoke by burning bones, dust and all kinds of rags, as though they wanted to drive away devils. Others make a fire on the edge of the crops and walk around them with hot embers. Others again lay a big fire at the end of a forest or at the foot of a hill, and sing

[* i.e. Hungarian peasants celebrating St. Ivan's Day -- Analyst]

527 and dance around it. Then they carry hot embers to the
789 houses, and put them in the gardens, so that caterpill ars shall not destroy the fruit, or else they put them in the middle of the seeds so that the crops shall not be blasted, etc. From the way girls jump over Saint Ivan's fire their married future can be foretold.»

527 To this day all these small and fragmentary customs and superstitions are practiced to a great extent, but their full enumeration would be lengthy and uninteresting, like Saint Ivan's song. We do not want to take up the reader's time with that. It is enough to know that these little customs on the whole are either meant to purify, or else they are the fragments of the once extensive, but since continually declining mating feast. But we must draw attention to one more thing: the ancient rolling of the wheel. The wheel — according to the learned record of olden times, — represents the Sun when it «reaches the highest point of the horizon». Another custom, preserved in a few places, whereby the wheel is bound round with straw and, when lit, is rolled down a hill, is even more explicit in its symbolic meaning. If we remember that the oldest wheels had no spokes, but that the next slightly improved ones already had four spokes, we can notice the connection between the burning sun wheel and the square fire of Saint Ivan around which the spectators sat in four groups, separated for four different reasons.

It is certain that what ever belief or superstition (the two are alike in their essense) determined the development of different purifying customs, the summer solstice, that is Saint Ivan's day, the feast of flowery Saint John, was first and foremost the feast of mating and of love. In the song itself these two things alone are of importance. Faith and tradition were only concerned with this aspect of the day, they tried to preserve it and perpetuate its memory

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

with poems and tunes. What is most vital on this day is thus summarized in a Transdanubian fragment: 527

The mahaleb cherry is ripe,
Its twigs are very bent,
There is a young woman amidst its leaves,
Hug the one you love best.
I hug and kiss this one
On Saint Ivan's hill, on its summit,
God shall give us a slow rain
Wash these two together,
Like two golden twigs.

The Matyó Wedding

It is a pious belief that marriages are made in Heaven. 581
As we are told to believe this, let us do so; we shall have 101
time to see with our own eyes when we enter the realm of eternal light . . . The Matyó tribe are very religious and are a group of the Hungarian people who live according to a very severe moral code. (The inhabitants of the County of Borsod, who live in the villages of *Mezőkövesd*, *Tard* and *Szentistván*, all close to the town of Miskolc, are called Matyó people.) They believe that marriages are made in Heaven, but not in the sense in which novelists in general are wont to think, namely that a mysterious force, Love, draws the couple to each other. There is no question of this. Amongst the Matyós a love match is a rara avis indeed, of course the Matyós fall in love like everyone else: the earthly bonds of marriage however are spun not by love, but by their parents.

The Matyó lad, like any other, can visit the lady of 584
his heart, whereever she may happen to live — every single evening if he choses to do so — but a wife approved by

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

585 which the girl becomes a woman. Taking off the wreath is usually the task of the best man. Sometimes the best man sticks the wreath onto his stick, sometimes it is hung onto a pitch fork and sometimes is carried back amidst the wedding party stuck onto a sword. All these are the remnants of extremely ancient customs. In the 17th century, at Transylvanian aristocratic weddings, the wreath was cut off the bride's head as a memento that «she shall thus behave herself in holy wedlock, that if she besoils it, a sword will fall onto her head.» But this Hungarian custom existed already in the 13th century. The son of the Hungarian king Béla IV. in 1264 also cut the wreath off the head of his bride, Kunigund, with a sword, according to the words of a German chronicler — juxta ritum suae gentis — according to the custom of his own nation. One may judge from all this the antiquity and the importance of popular custom from the point of view of cultural history.

The gathering of the grapes

521 This is the last of the great outdoor tasks which have
245 to be done in autumn. In time it is the last, in the way of amusement and gaiety it is the first. No wonder, as it means collecting, sorting and pressing the universal medicine of all Hungarian sadness. It is a lasting joy to the farmer if he presses a great quantity of nectar in his cellar and it is at least one gay day of oblivion for the poor people who, «sic vos non vobis», collect for others and press for others : but on this occasion they can also drink plentifully — themselves. Gathering the grapes without gaiety and

10:Viski E-4, 5 (no date)1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

527 wine is like having a wedding without music. According
245 to ancient custom, the gathering of the grapes is not serious work: that is, only half of it is serious, its other half is made up of amusement. It is part of the tradition that the work shall be unpaid — and one does not look a gift horse in the mouth. It is like the help volunteered for picking maize and plucking feathers, or for reaping the harvest or helping to build a house in the Szekler country, where all relations, friends and neighbours co-operate and in exchange for a few turns of work receive a few glasses of wine or turns of dancing. Of course the gipsies cannot be missing from the gathering of the grapes. In ancient times they had pipes, later on gipsy players of stirring, undisciplined Hungarian songs. But why have discipline in enjoyment: why use a breake when the cart is going up hill?

[192] In Hungarian the process of gathering the grapes is expressed by one word: *Szüret*. When a Hungarian has an unexpected joy, when he has hopes of a great success, when a vista of unforeseen possibilities opens up before him, surpassing his most daring expectations, he expresses his joy with the one word: *Szüret!*

245 The Hungarian vineyards afford pleasure and gaiety,
273 they deserve affection and sacrifices. The volcanic soil of
[134] the Hungarian vineyards is unsurpassed in any other part of the world. It yields the golden coloured «aszu» of Tokaj, which according to a Hungarian saying revives even the dead, the red wine of Eger called «bull's blood», the sweet poison of Badacsony or Somlyó which makes the dumb speak and forces even diplomats to tell the truth! Long experience has ripened the Hungarian proverb: truth is found in wine; «in vino veritas» as our Latin speaking forbears used to say. Wine is the national drink of the Hungarians. Thus does a popular song express this truth:

245 culture. Faithful agas and beys were carried home on
273 stretchers more than once from the table of hospitable Hungarian soldiers and captains; or perhaps not from the table, but from under the table . . .

245 To-day, as well as in olden times, most weddings
527 are celebrated on new bread and new wine, that is after the grapes have been gathered. Gathering the grapes is the gay closing of the yearly farm work, it is the crowning of labour with grapes ! The saying of a Hungarian ballad :

> She who finds a red grape first
> Will celebrate her wedding in autumn !

indicates merely the usual season in which weddings are held. Small wonder that the young people look forward to the gay days of autumn with an even greater longing than the farmer who has run out of wine. The time for gathering the grapes round the Balaton (Badacsony) and in the part of Terézia, Somlyó, Orsolya and Tokaj begins on the day of Simon and Judas, that is generally in the second half of October. But in 1812 it happened that in consequence of the heavy snow the grapes could not be gathered in that year at all, but only at the end of February in the following year. The new wine thus came too late and the weddings were left over until the following spring . . . When the storks came back ! . . .

The vineyards, which are carefully guarded and are deadly quiet in the late autumn, are seething with life at the time of gathering the grapes. The hills seem to move: coloured patches swarm about on them, songs resound, guns go off. The rattles and whips for frightening birds are now used to frighten the female part of the assembly. In these light-hearted days the guard shoots off all his cartridges, he will have — if he'll be able to buy them — some more next year; to-day is the day of gaiety and

10: Viski E-4, 5 (no date) 1932 EC1 Hungary EC1

unrestrained noise ! The gipsy creeps about the hills, from vineyard to vineyard, as on a namesday or on a great feast, to greet his favourite clients and, especially the owner of the vineyard, who comes to listen to him at the inn when he has run out of his own wine. The door of the cellar is open, the wine from last year and the year before takes effect, provokes laughter and jokes, and brings songs to the lips of those who like it. Not only does it inspire speech and song ; it also adjusts hats to a rakish angle and makes the steps of the guard uncertain as he goes from vineyard to vineyard : and, if it strikes a «long hair», its effect is also sufficient : women understand the jokes much better !

In the open space before the cellar the «paprika» meet boils ; the stuffed cabbage, brought from home, is warmed up, and those whose appetite has been taken away by the grapes can still put it right before dinner with excellent rape and wonderful, fragrant peach brandy. The table is laid on grass which is going grey, around it blossom good appetite, good health, friendship, gaiety and one more thing unavoidable amongst Hungarians : — toasts — and later on discussions about politics. Finally the children have to recite a few poems. Most frequently we hear the appropriate poem of the well known Hungarian poet Lévay, called : «Our *Szüret*» ... And then they go home early in the falling twilight, as to-morrow there is going to be another day. There is not much work in autumn, and it might give one the chance of a grand answer if someone asked how long the gathering of the grapes lasted ...

But the «szüret» continues at home and in more than one place it is followed by a hot supper, its end being well after midnight.

Sometimes things do not go as smoothly as all that. If the weather is unkind, spiteful people wish the gatherers of the grapes a «*Large vintage*», or «*Big boots*». This is not

245
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a good wish. It is a veiled reference to the fact that the channels of the heavens increase what has grown by the mercy of God; the vintage will be larger, because water is mixed with it. The big boots are wished as a protection against the terrible mud, which makes not only walking, but even standing a miserably difficult thing on the steep hills, and causes such big «sandals» to stick to the boots every minute that it takes enormous strenght to get rid of them.

The owner of a large vineyard engages workers paid by the day. According to ancient custom they make an enormous «grape» bouquet, such a big one that two people have to carry it on their shoulders on a pole. Soon there is a whole procession. The gipsies go in front playing gay dance tunes, after them come a few players, who do all kinds of comic turns, then the gatherers of the grapes, then a few people who carry flags, finally girls dressed in white surrounding the enormous cluster-like grape bouquet. The girls wear wreaths made of wild flowers on their heads. They pass through the village dancing, singing and shouting, they go to the house of the farmer and, on their way, they drink from their flask to the health of every person they meet. In the farmer's house they hang the big cluster of grapes onto the ceiling, and they are then given a good meal.

In other places the lads go through the village on horseback, in their wake come the girls in carriages and the «szüret» procession is finished at the village inn with a dance. The innkeepers of Budapest also arrange the same kind of thing at the time of the «szüret» with the help of people paid for the job, thus uniting business advertisement with ancient Hungarian customs. A procession of this kind in the Hungarian capital usually ends up in a little inn with a garden in Buda, where everyone can join the dance

245 527 which follows it. This is an artificial flower bouquet, a pale copy of the old, familiar custom, but it tries with much good will to create at least the illusion of the real thing for the joy of people who live in the great town. On seeing it people from the country-side at least dwell on the memories of their childhood.

The richest, brightest and gayest «szüret» customs prevailed in the districts in which the wine harvest was the best and richest. The first of these is the district of Tokaj and in it the little town of Mád, which is a famous place for grape ceremonies. The entertainments of its gentry are worthy of a novelist's pen. The dances of its coopers and agricultural labourers preserved a whole list 415 789 of ancient Hungarian customs. Speaking of Carnival, let us mention a few.

If wine is the favourite national drink of the Hungarians, it is necessary for it to appear in proper attire. The things with which wine is clothed, are : a stone bottle, a flask or a noggin. The noggin can be a decoration on a table, a nice partner on a journey, a dear lover always kissed with joy ! The person who knocks it out of our hands shall be cursed ! Terrifying, fearful words are usually written on the flask, to cut short all kinds of evil thoughts. For instance :

To the person desiring to steal this flask,
[illegible]h that he shall become so grand,
That he shall push wheel-barrows in Buda or Pest,
And become the captain of the beggars !

But if we approach the beloved flask without evil thoughts, it speaks to us as Hungarian men usually address their guests :

This bottle, made of clay, belongs to Simon Kiss,
From this he offers a drink to many of his friends.
Take a nice, long draught from it,
A bad road does not matter to a good horse !

11: Karolyi E-4, 5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

CALENDAR CUSTOMS

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The substance of Hungarian peasant celebrations is the holiday spirit, which finds its outward expression in the fact that people put on the treasured Sunday best, go to church to pray, eat their festive meals in their whitewashed homes, drink the fiery Hungarian wines, make merry and sing and dance.

We have described the dress, the songs, and the dances[1] of the Hungarian villagers. Let us now throw a quick glance at the occasions of these peasant celebrations, which are occasions not only of purely formal interest but are full of meaning at all times. They actually embrace the most important movements of life; they are the events which in their incessant flow form humanity; the dates which mark the coming and going of the seasons, the happenings on which the well-being, the existence of the Hungarian village itself depends.

To the uninitiated, some of these ancestral customs might have the appearance of mere superstitious practices. In fact, they are filled with a deep symbolic meaning, connected with the primitive wisdom of countless centuries. They all fit into an unwritten ritual and follow one another in an unending cycle year after year. In our descriptions here we have also chosen to follow the course of the seasons throughout the calendar year.

1 [See category 116, pp. 9-14--Analyst]
p. 75

11: Karolyi E-4, 5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

527 796 We mention in our description a good number of the most typical ones, but one should not think that all are celebrated everywhere. That would mean that the year in Hungary is nothing but an endless celebration — which it definitely is not. Some of the customs on our list characterize this region or profession, some, again, another. What they all have in common, though, is the feeling, and that quality of the genuine which is the truest feature of the Hungarian village.

In the Hungarian village, the New Year greetings are conveyed not only with empty words but by expressive symbolic acts. The old year is "burned" or "chased out", and the New Year is "rung in"; that is, it is greeted with joy and celebration amidst the pealing of New Year bells. One of the most interesting of the surviving New Year customs is "turning the herd round", practised particularly in North-eastern Hungary. Groups of young men go from house to house in the village, and, amid shouts and the cracking of whips, behave as if they were turning the cattle round and driving the herd out to the pastures. The symbolism of this act is evident at the turning of the year, when the cycle of life begins anew. It is no easy matter even for the best of herdsmen to turn a herd of cattle round; it is only just, too, that the role of the herder should fall to the cleverest lad in the village.

796 On the sixth of January, Epiphany is celebrated. Water is blessed in the parish church, after which the priest and his ministrants make the turn of the village to bless the houses with holy water. In various parts of the country groups of young boys or girls representing the three Kings of the Epiphany go from farm to farm, carrying on a pole the miraculous star and singing the song of the Saviour's birth. They mark the doors with

796 the soil. Today the girls are still thoroughly drenched in some regions; in others they are simply sprinkled with a few drops of perfumed water, which tends to tone down the original custom to little more than a faint memory of itself. Naturally, the number of well-wishers is most significant as to the popularity of a girl, and therefore, in spite of an apparent reticence, they are only too glad to endure what seems to be an ordeal. In return, Easter eggs, often called "red eggs" from the dominating colour, painted brightly and ornamented with delightful designs, are given to the boys. This gift of eggs is also symbolic: the egg is the seed of life, the symbol of eternal resurrection and fertility.

On St Mark's Day, the twenty-fifth of April, the touching ceremony of blessing the wheat-fields is performed. In Catholic villages the priest and his parishioners go in procession to the fields to perform this picturesque Hungarian ceremony amidst the ocean of waving wheat, chanting the invocation of the Lord's grace, "so that fog shall not strangle, hail shall not batter, storm shall not break, and fire shall not destroy the only hope of a poor nation." In Protestant villages fresh bread is offered to the Almighty with a prayer in evocation of his blessing. Farm-hands are engaged on St George's Day, the twenty-seventh of April, labour contracts are renewed, and the summer clothes, to be worn until St Michael's Day, September 29th (which is the paying-off day of farm-hands), are distributed and put on throughout the country. The months of April and May are the most beautiful months of the Hungarian spring. Field and forest are in blossom, and Nature fulfils the miracle of creation.

• 527 On the first of May the villages are decorated with green boughs and flowers. The boys of marriageable age,

11: Karolyi E-4.5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

527 after having spent the night in merry revelry in the village, erect May trees — slender saplings of which only the crown is preserved, richly decorated with coloured ribbons, kerchiefs, and a variety of odd little ornaments — in front of the houses of their best girls. On this same day the May-walk takes place. The maidens of the village go out to the forest, where they break fresh green boughs which, like the May-tree, they decorate with ribbons, kerchiefs, and other ornaments. Afterwards, in pairs, the long procession of girls parades with graceful, rhythmic movements through every street in the village, singing traditional May-songs.

796 On the Day of the Ascension, which falls always on the fortieth day after Easter, the youngest boys and girls receive their first Holy Communion. The older people gather in procession to offer prayer before the village Crucifix and before every cross erected within the boundaries of the village.

The sixteenth of May is the day of St John, Patron of the waterways and their users. The waterfolk celebrate this day with a colourful procession of brightly illuminated flower-decorated boats, at the head of which, in the most elaborate setting, the statue of the Saint is carried. On the shores, thickly lined with admiring throngs, burning torches are erected.

Urban is the Patron Saint of the vineyards. This Saint's Day, the twenty-fifth of May, is celebrated in the vineyards with a colourful ceremony.

527 524 Although many warm days of the late spring have gone by, it is only after the feast of Whitsuntide that summer really begins. Whitsuntide is celebrated amidst great rejoicing and with ceremonial games handed down from prehistoric times from generation to generation. The original meaning of these games has become some-

11: Karolyi E-4, 5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

527 what faded, but it can still be clearly traced. In some
524 regions the lads organize driving or horse-riding races, in others the roping of the bull is the attraction of the day, which is followed by the election of the Whitsun King, recalling the tournaments of old which gave the setting for the election of tribal leaders. The Whitsun King's symbolic reign lasts only from Sunday noon to Monday evening, hence the much-quoted proverb recalling the brevity and futility of earthly things: "short as the Kingdom of Whitsun".

The election of a Whitsun Queen is another relic of ancient rites, surviving in the form of children's games. In some villages the girls choose one of their own, whom they parade round the village as their deeply veiled Whitsun Queen. They sing merrily the words of the age-old Whitsun song:

In a rose-tree have I grown
On Red Whitsun's Day...

and perform little games which recall the invocation of fertility practised in a forgotten past.

796 Corpus Christi is the first Thursday after Trinity Sunday, and is known as the Day of the Lord. It is Hungary's great festival in honour of the Holy Eucharist. Open-air altars are erected on this day in various parts of the villages, and a procession, of which perhaps only the picturesqueness is greater than the solemnity, visits these decorated altars in ritual succession.

One of the most popular and most interesting of the festivals of the summer is celebrated on the Day of St John the Baptist, the twenty-fourth of June, popularly known as St Ivan's Day. Originally the great festival of the summer solstice, today it has descended to us as a midsummer night's dream which reaches

11: Karolyi E-4, 5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

796 its climax in the mystic dance round St Ivan's fire. In the open fields, under the stars, round St Ivan's fire made of fragrant woods and herbs, lovers are "sung together". There are a great number of St Ivan's songs in which this typical *motif* returns:

May God send a slow shower
To wash these two together,
Like two golden twigs...

796 Popular belief attaches much importance to this
797 fire-dance, which is the first of the many acts in the developing of friendship and love between boy and girl which will come to a happy end in the merry marriages of Carnival. One after the other the girls jump across St Ivan's fire, while the rest, dancing round the fire, utter the name of the girl who is jumping, together with the name of the boy whom they know that their friend has taken to her heart. If the jump is successful, there remains no doubt that the desired union of two lovers will come true before the winter is over. Often this dance is an all-girl affair, as if to assure that every girl may unveil her heart's desire without embarrassment. Of course, the boys learn the happy news early enough....

241 Soon after, on the twenty-ninth of June, St Peter
527 and St Paul's Day, the wheat-harvest begins. From the point of view of the Hungarian peasant this is the most critical and, everything considered, most important event of the year. To understand the magnitude of the event, it should be remembered that in the Hungary of today, as always in the past, the mainstay of the people has been the yield of the wheat-crop. The lives of millions of farmer-families, countless farm-hands, and share-croppers depend upon a bountiful harvest, and it is

11: Karolyi E-4, 5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

241 decided by the yield of the crop how the winter purchases
•527 and the many prospective marriages will turn out.

In order that all who need it may share in the
[407] blessings of the harvest, the use of harvesting machinery is not tolerated in Hungary. The role of the labourer has remained an essential part in cutting the crops, and thanks to this, one may still see and admire the
[412] spectacle of swinging scythes working their way into the fields, felling the swaying wheat into rows that follow the undulating line of valley and hill. After the men come the plucking girls, whose deft and tireless hands bind the wheat into sheaves and pile them up into huge cross-like formations. Harvest must end in the shortest possible time, because the ripe ears easily spill the heavy grain, and it would be a bitter thing to see the price of life falling to waste. From daybreak until the last faint rays of the declining moon harvesting goes on, and once the crop is cut the sheaves are piled upon the carriages and taken to the farmyard to be threshed and preserved in the granary. It is a wonderful sight to watch the immense loads pass by, drawn by a double yoke of long-horned Hungarian oxen, while the slanting rays of the setting sun throw a halo of golden dust round the glittering mass of fresh-cut wheat.

527 As soon as the last of the wheat-crop has been cut, the harvesters prepare for the harvest festival — a feast vibrating with the anticipation of rest and recreation — a ceremony permeated with satisfaction and gratitude, to be followed by the merriment of unbounded celebration. Of the longest stalks of unthreshed wheat a harvest wreath or crown is woven, or, in some regions, a monstrance, a tower, or a bell. The harvest wreath is taken home from the fields hanging on a pole which is placed on the shoulders of the prettiest girls. It is then presented

11: Karolyi E-4.5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

527 to the landlord by his harvesters in a little scene of touching simplicity.

"We have woven a beautiful wreath from slender stalks and heavy wheat-ears and from the many lovely flowers of the fields. We have brought it before our lord to join with him in thanksgiving to God for His blessings and a plentiful harvest..."

In similar words the landlord expresses his thanks and throws open the gates to the throng of happy harvesters, to whom he offers a rich meal, casks of wine and pouches of virgin tobacco. The gypsies of the village-end gather as from nowhere, and to the strains of the music, merry songs are sung, to be followed by dancing that has no end...

Corn-husking, towards the end of the summer, and the wine-harvest, in early autumn, are celebrated [245] in a very similar fashion. The gathering of grapes begins in Hungary about mid-October, usually on the Day of St Simon and St Judas. On the morning of the wine-harvest the congregation goes to church. After the invocation of God's blessing, they gather in the market-place, and from there, to the strains of church hymns, the traditional march to the vineyards begins. The solemn hymns soon yield to merrier tunes, which grow brighter and brighter as the march proceeds.

In places the ripening grapes are protected from hungry birds and from thieves until the whole crop is ready to be picked. The birds are scared away by the incessant songs of the girls; the thieves are kept at bay by the presence of the boys. But the group of the latter always stay outside the enclosure reserved for the women-folk.

After the grapes have matured, gay harvesters gather and take them to the press-house. As at the end of the

11: Karolyi E-4, 5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

527 wheat-harvest, the grape-gatherers prepare a huge bouquet of fragrant grapes, which they carry around the village or, when the harvesting is done on an estate, present to the landlord in a quaint ceremony. The presentation or the procession of the grapes is followed by the vintage festival, which is one of the merriest and longest of celebrations.

273 527 Wine is the national drink of the Hungarians, and this is clearly brought to light in the merry vintage song which tells that

> The Slovaks all drink brandy,
> The Germans all drink beer,
> The Hungarians drink wine only,
> The very best, my dear . . .

796 But long before the wine-harvest there are other red-letter days of great importance. On the twenty-sixth of July, St Anna, the mother of the Virgin, is honoured with picturesque Anna Fairs throughout the country. This fair is somewhat akin to the yearly fairs held on the day of the local Patron Saint, in which trinkets, sweets, scarves, toys, kerchiefs, trumpets, rattles, and teasers are sold from stands richly hung with coloured cracknels and beautifully decorated ginger-cakes, baked in the form of a heart, with a tiny mirror inserted in the centre upon which love rhymes are written in coloured sugar glazing, or baked in the form of a mounted Hussar or other favourite figures of Hungarian fantasy.

The fifteenth of August is the Day of the Assumption. It is also the first day of St Stephen's Week, during which the memory of Hungary's first King and Patron Saint is honoured with country-wide celebrations. The great week ends in the striking procession of the Holy Right Hand on the twentieth of August, which is

11: Karolyi E-4, 5 (no date) 1931? EC1 Hungary EC1

husband; and to the newly married a baby or a pair of sturdy twins.

Some time in the month of December the fattened pigs of the farm are slaughtered. Like harvest, it is one of the great days in the peasant household. Meat and lard, smoked ham, sausages, and that all-important staple of the Hungarian peasantry, bacon, that will fill the larder and feed the family throughout the winter months are deftly prepared in the course of a single day, in an effort in which every member of the household, the neighbours, and the friends of the family participate. It is a double holiday for the children. They are allowed to stay away from school to help their parents at home. If the yield is up to expectation, there is good reason for all to be happy. A fresh meal is prepared with the finest ingredients: a rich soup, a variety of meats, sausages, *sauerkraut*, sweets, and wine compose the festive meal in which all who have helped at the slaughter partake amidst an outburst of merry-making, contentment and happiness. Song follows song, to be interrupted only by a toast or a joke.

Christmas brings to the country one of the most deeply felt Hungarian holidays. After a day of fasting and tension during which presents are prepared and the fragrant Christmas pine is decorated, Christmas Eve, the anniversary of the miraculous birth, descends. The tiny coloured candles on the trees are lit, and in an atmosphere of peace and quiet happiness the presents are distributed by God's Angel. After the festive meal, Christmas carols are sung, children play themselves to sleep with their new toys, while the adults of the family and the older children prepare for Midnight Mass. It is an experience of rare charm and intensity to witness the small groups of peasants, bundled up in heavy winter